

Message Text

SECRET

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51

ACTION EA-13

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ADP-00 PM-03 DODE-00 NSC-10 NSCE-00

CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 IO-03 L-02 OMB-01 RSR-01

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R 051040 Z APR 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9696

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

USDAO SAIGON

COMUSSAG

S E C R E T SAIGON 5717

LIMDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, PFOR, MOPS, CB

SUBJECT: SITUATION IN CAMBODIA

REF: PHNOM PENH 3107

1. IN A CONVERSATION APRIL 5 AT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY, KY (WHO IN THE ABSENCE OF THE FOREIGN MINISTER IS ACTIONG MINISTER IN THE SUBSTANTIVE THOUGH NOT THE PROTOCOL SENSE) GAVE BENNETT SOME GLOOMY VIEWS OF THE SITUATION IN CAMBODIA. THE FOREIGN MINISTRY HAS RECEIVED A TELEGRAM FROM PHNOM PENH SAYING THAT THE COMMUNISTS ARE CLOSE TO THE CITY AND ELEMENTS OF THE POPULATION AND ARMED FORCES ARE FLEEING FROM THEM. THE COMMUNISTS ARE USING THE TACTIC, OFTEN USED IN VIETNAM, OF STICKING CLOSE TO THE POPULATION TO MAKE BOMBING DIFFICULT. POL SUPPLIES, ACCORDING TO THE VIETNAMESE EMBASSY IN PHNOM PENH, ARE DOWN TO FOUR DAYS' SUPPLY AND THE CONVOY WHICH SHOULD REPLENISH THESE SUPPLIES IS UNABLE TO MOVE BECAUSE OF POOR SECURITY ON THE MEKONG.

2. KY SAID HE HAD BEEN GIVING QUESTION OF GVN PROVIDING SECURITY FOR CONVOY SERIOUS CONSIDERATION. HE BELIEVES THIS WOULD NOT BE
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VIOLATION OF THE PEACE AGREEMENT BECAUSE (1) IT WOULD BE DONE AT CAMBODIAN REQUEST AND WOULD NOT BE AN AGGRESSIVE ACT; (2) INTERNATIONAL COMMERCE ON THE MEKONG IS PROTECTED BY TREATY; (3) THERE IS STILL NO AGREED CEASEFIRE IN CAMBODIA, HENCE THE PARIS AGREEMENT DOES NOT YET APPLY.

3. KY SAID THERE HAS BEEN NO RECENT REQUEST FROM THE CAMBODIAN GOVERNMENT FOR PROVIDING SECURITY FOR THE CONVOY, AND HE DOES NOT UNDERSTAND THE CAMBODIAN GOVERNMENT'S RETICENCE. WERE A REQUEST RECEIVED HE WOULD RECOMMEND TO THE PRIME MINISTER THAT IT BE GRANTED.

4. TURNING TO THE QUESTION OF AIR SUPPORT FOR THE CAMBODIANS, KY SAID HE DID NOT KNOW WHETHER THE GVN MILITARY HAD RECEIVED REQUESTS, BUT HE THOUGHT THAT IN CASE OF NEED VNAF WOULD BE JUSTIFIED IN CARRYING OUT AIR SUPPORT FOR FANK IN THE ABSENCE OF AN AGREED CEASEFIRE.

5. KY DWELT BRIEFLY ON THE SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES WHICH A COLLAPSE IN CAMBODIA WOULD HAVE FOR SOUTH VIETNAM. HE MENTIONED THAT IN SUCH AN EVENT THE NVA WOULD HAVE UNTRAMMELED USE OF CAMBODIA FOR SENDING SUPPLIES INTO SVN ACROSS THE BORDER; THAT THOSE NVA UNITS NOW ENGAGED FIGHTING THE CAMBODIANS WOULD MOVE TO JOIN THE NVA IN SVN; AND THAT EASTERN CAMBODIA WOULD BECOME ONE VAST BASE AREA FROM WHICH HANOI COULD PREPARE A NEW OFFENSIVE AGAINST SVN. HE MENTIONED THAT SOME OF THE MEN AND SUPPLIES NOW INVOLVED IN THE ATTACK ON TONG LE CHAN WERE ENTERING SVN FROM THE FISH HOOK AREA.

6. KY ASKED THAT WE KEEP IN TOUCH ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SITUATION IN CAMBODIA AND SAID HE WOULD APPRECIATE RECEIVING OUR EMBASSY PHNOM PENH'S ASSESSEMENT OF THE SITUATION. BENNETT CONFIRMED GVN'S GENERAL APPRECIATION OF CAMBODIAN SITUATION AND GAVE DY SOME OF THE HIGHLIGHTS IN REFTEL. WOULD APPRECIATE DEPARTMENT'S AND EMBASSY PHNOM PENH'S COMMENT.
WHITEHOUSE

SECRET

*** Current Handling Restrictions *** LIMDIS

*** Current Classification *** SECRET

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts:
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 05 APR 1973
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: hilburpw
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973SAIGON05717
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: RR
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: SAIGON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730434/aaaahrbk.tel
Line Count: 104
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: 73 PHNOM PENH 3107
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: hilburpw
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 19 NOV 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <19-Nov-2001 by cunninfx>; APPROVED <23-Nov-2001 by hilburpw>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> gwr 971201
Subject: SITUATION IN CAMBODIA
TAGS: MOPS, PFOR, PINS, PINT, CB, VS, PINT
To: COMUSSAG
EA
O SAIGON
PHNOM PENH
SECSTATE WASHDC
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

